ON

Dr. Swift's

LETTER

TO THE

Earl of OXFORD,

ABOUT THE

English Tongue.

by John Oldmixon

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TELLER

RELIGIONS

THE PREFACE.

THE Bold Manner of publiſhing the Letter for correcting, improving, and aſcertaining the Engliſh Tongue, made me conclude there was ſomething very extraordinary in it, and more than any one could expect from Perſons that were never thought to trouble themſelves much about Fine Language. But upon dipping into it, I found there was nothing worthy the Character the Author acquir'd by other Ingenious Pieces in our Tongue, tho' I confeſs, it was not ſo much for the Beauty of his Style as for other Qualities, ſome of which a Divine need not brag of.

'Tis probable, our late Correſpondence with France put ſuch a Whim into ſome Folks Heads, and becauſe they have an Academy for the ſame Uſe at Paris, we forſooth muſt have one at London. The Foreign News, which ſometimes tells us more Truth of our doings here than our own, has the very Names of the Members of the Academy which the Doctor ſpeaks of. I do not find that it is come to any thing more yet than meeting over a Bottle once a Week, and being Merry: At which Times People mind

mind talking much, more than talking well. I shou'd have taken what is printed in the Amsterdam Gazette *to have been only a dull* Dutch *Jest upon those Men, if this* Letter *had not been written, and some broad Hints given, that we are to be happier than we thought of, and to be surpriz'd with a Society that shall make us as* Polite *as that of* Reformation *has made us* Godly; *and I wish it may answer the Ends of it with all my Heart. But the more I reflected upon this* Project *and the* Projectors, *the more I was diffident of it, for the Reasons mention'd in the following* Pages.

I know very well the Epistle has but a sorry Reputation, even with the Writer's own Party, *that it is look'd upon as a silly superficial Performance, and to be design'd only for an Opportunity to shew what a* Nack *he has at* Panegyrick. *Be that as it will, after I had consider'd the Subject he writes more leisurely than I was won't to do, I was loth to lose those Considerations; and having put 'em into this Form, I flatter'd my self the Publick would not receive them ill, at least all those whom Faction and Prejudice have not render'd Insensible of Truth and Reason, and to such, a Man must be well set to work that writes a Task suitable to the Integrity and Ability of* Abel *and his Brethren, among whom I am very unwilling to reckon our Author.*

Reflections

REFLECTIONS

ON

Dr. *Swift*'s Letter,

ABOUT

Refining the ENGLISH TONGUE.

I Should be guilty of the greateſt Folly in the World, if I ſhould go about to give a Character of Perſons of whom I have no manner of Knowledge. To ſpeak well or ill of 'em wou'd be equally Ridiculous and Dangerous: For it muſt be all Invention, and I might then abuſe a Man both in my Praiſe and Diſpraiſe. It is thus with me with Reſpect to the Author of the Letter lately publiſh'd about our Language, and to his Patron. I know neither of them, and if I ſay a Word more than themſelves, or the World have ſaid of them, I muſt have recourſe to Fiction, which I cannot think of without abhorrence, where Reputation is concern'd.

That good old Church Martyr the Earl of *Strafford* was of Opinion, *Common Fame* was enough to hang a Man, as in the Caſe of the Duke of *Buckingham*, when he was impeach'd by the Commons for Male Practices in his Miniſtry; and there were no

better Grounds for accuſing him, than that every Body ſaid ſo. I am quite of another Mind, and let the World ſay what they will of any one, I am for condemning no body but whom the Law Condemns, and therefore in theſe Reflections I ſhall not conſider ſo much how to pleaſe the Spleen of one Party, as how to expoſe the Arrogance of another, who would lord it over us in every Thing, and not only force their Principles upon us, but their Language, wherein they endeavour to ape their good Friends the *French*, who for theſe three or fourſcore Years have been attempting to make their Tongue as Imperious as their Power.

This moſt Ingenious Writer has ſo great a Value for his own Judgment in Matters of Stile, that he has put his Name to his Letter, and a Name greater than his own, as if he meant to Bully us into his Methods for pinning down our Language, and making it as Criminal to admit Foreign Words as Foreign Trades, tho' our Tongue may be enrich'd by the one, as much as our Traffick by the other. He would have it *corrected, enlarg'd and aſcertain'd*, and who muſt do it? He tells you with great Modeſty and Diſcernment in the 27th Page, *The Choice of Hands ſhould be left to him*, and *he would then aſſign it over to the Women*, becauſe they are ſofter mouth'd, and are more for *Liquids* than the Men, as he try'd himſelf in a very notable Experiment. I wonder a grave, ſerious Divine, who is ſo well vers'd in College Learning, ſhould

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in Compliment to a certain Lady, whose Breeding and Conversation must have given her wonderful Opportunities to refine our Tongue, imagine, that the Two Universities would give up so Essential a Branch of their Privileges to the Ladies, and take from them the Standard of *English*. This puts me in mind of *Fontenelle*'s way of Learning a Language, which he recommends to be by having an Intrigue with some Fair Foreigner; and beginning with the Verb *I Love*, *You Love*, &c. It is well enough from Him, a *Papist*, or *Layman*, but for a Protestant Divine to erect an Academy of Women to improve our Stile, is very extraordinary and gallant, and little agrees with the cruel Quotation of the Author of *the Tale of a Tub*, p. 163.

——— *Cunnus Teterrimi Belli*
Causa ———————

That Excellent Moralist has not been pleas'd to discover himself, nor to Print his Name, but has set his Mark to his Works, which he has Embellish'd with new Flowers of Rhetorick, that shew what a Genius he has for refining Language, and how happily one may use the Figures of Cursing, Swearing, and Bawdy, which before were entirely exploded. Tho' we cannot well suppose the Writer of that *Merry Tale* is any way related to the Author of the Letter, yet out of my great Zeal to promote his Project of polishing Us, I must refer to some shining Passages in

that incomparable Treatiſe, and let the World judge if any Man can be more fit to Preſide in a Society for refining the *Engliſh* Tongue.

Tale of a Tub. p. 109. *Z---nds where's the wonder of that? By G--- I ſaw a large Houſe of Lime and Stone travel over Sea and Land. By G--- Gentlemen, I tell you nothing but Truth, and the Devil broil them eternally that will not believe me.* If there is any Thing like this in our Language from the lewdeſt of our Stage-Writers, I give them over to Mr *Collier* and the Reformers to do with them what they pleaſe. Yet I am inform'd theſe Florid Strokes came from the Pen of a Reverend Doctor, who has ſollicited lately for a Deanery, and ſets up mightily for a Refiner of our Tongue, which he would adorn with ſome more ſuch graces of Speech; as, *Lord, what a Filthy Croud is here*; *Bleſs me! what Devil has rak'd this Rabble together*; *Z---nds, what ſqueezing is this! A Plague confound you for an overgrown Sloven? Who in the Devil's Name, I wonder, helps to make up the Crowd half ſo much as your ſelf? Don't you conſider with a Pox, that you take up more room with that Carcaſs than any Five here? Bring your own Guts to a reaſonable Compaſs, and be d—d.* I tremble while I repeat ſuch Stuff, which I defy any Man to match in any Language, Dead or Living, *Pagan* or *Chriſtian*; and yet this is the Eloquence, as is pretended, of a ſound Orthodox Divine; one of the Champions of our Ch rch, and the deſign'd Chairman of a new Academy to reform and improve our Stile. I ſhall only add here another

Preface, p. 21.

Flower

Flower in p. 101. *If you fail hereof G—— damn you and yours to all Eternity*, ſays the ſame Reverend Author, whoſe Works on ſome other Occaſion I ſhall examine, as to their Divinity, Piety, and other Merit, that the World may ſee on what Foot that Author has eſtabliſh'd his Fame, and how judiciouſly a Man of his Cloth made himſelf firſt known to the World. Whether the late *Examiner*, the *Miſcellanies in Proſe and Verſe* publiſh'd by *Morphew*, and ſome more ſuch Political and Pious Productions, did not come from the ſame Hand, I ſhall not determine. They are generally ſaid to be written by the ſame Perſon, and how nearly related that Perſon is to our Letter Writer, is as well known as that he is a Doctor of Divinity, and hopes to make his Fortune by Preferments in that Church of which he is ſo bright an Ornament, as appears by what has been already quoted; by which one may perceive, how well qualify'd he is to form Schemes, for the *refining of our Tongue*, and the *Advancement of Religion*; of both which he has written. The latter does not come under Conſideration ſo naturally in this Diſcourſe as it will in another, and therefore it ſhall be deferr'd till ſuch an Opportunity offers. Perhaps Our Elegant Writer will pretend to juſtify theſe Innovations in our Speech, for which the beſt Critick upon him would be my Lord Chief Juſtice, by the Example of our Modern Poets, and the Oaths and Curſes of the Stage, where I never heard any thing ſo

very

very Lewd, in Defyance of our Religion, Laws, and whatever is held Sacred by Christians, and Protestants. If he had a hand in the *Conduct of the Allies*, the *Remarks*, and other such Factious Papers, as is reported, and he never once thought fit to disown, being more Proud of the Honour done him in it, than asham'd of the Falshood and Scandal of those Libels, it is no strange Matter that a Man of such a Conscience should do or write any Thing; Cursing and Swearing being not so bad as the Robberies that Libeller has committed on the good Name of the best and greatest Men of this Age and Nation.

The merriest part of the Project he has been hatching, for an *English* Academy to bring our Tongue to his pitch of Perfection, is that he has assign'd, that Task to the *Tories*, whose Wit have so distinguish'd them in all Times. If there had ever been a Man among 'em who had a right Notion of Letters or Language, who had any relish of Politeness, it had been something. But as there never was one, unless it were two or three Apostate Whigs who had been bred up by the Charity of those Friends they deserted, that had any smattering of Learning, except in Pedantry, nor Tast of any Books but *Eikon Basilike*, and the *Thirtieth* of *January* Sermons; 'tis amazing that he shou'd be so foolish as to fancy, that Learning which always goes by the Stile of Commonwealth, would submit to the Arbitary Government of an

Ignorant

Ignorant and Tyrannical Faction. Nor is it at all ſtrange, that thoſe, who by their Practices and Principles, have for above Fourſcore Years been doing their utmoſt to Enſlave us, ſhou'd always have a Contempt for Wit and Eloquence, which ever have been the Friends of Reaſon and Liberty.

Whoever reads the Thirty Fifth Chapter of *Longinus*, will find, that 'tis impoſſible for a Tory to ſucceed in Eloquence, and that if they cannot impoſe ſo far on Men's Underſtandings, as to make Fuſtian paſs for Oratory, their Project of an Academy, will be as Chimerical as if they ſhou'd flatter us with a Trade and Settlements in the Moon. The Reader will not be diſpleas'd, to ſee what the Ancients thought of the Capacity of Men of ſuch Principles in Matters of Eloquence, and let a long Experience among us, prove the right Judgment the *Philoſopher* in *Longinus* made of them 1500 Years ago. He is treating of the *Cauſes of the Decay of Humane Wit*; *I can never enough admire*, ſaid he, *how it came to paſs, that there are ſo many Orators in our Times, and ſo few of 'em riſe very high in the Sublime; ſo Steril are our Wits now a Days; is it not*, continues he, *becauſe what is generally ſaid of Free Governments, that they nouriſh and form great Genius's is true? eſpecially, ſince almoſt all the Famous Orators that ever flouriſh'd and liv'd died with them? Indeed, can there be any thing that raiſes the Souls of Great Men more than Liberty; any thing which can more powerfully excite and awaken in us that*

Sentiment

Sentiment of Nature which provokes us to Emulation, and the glorious desire of seeing our selves advanc'd above others? Add to this, that the Rewards propos'd in such Governments, whet and perfectly Polish the Orators Wit and make 'em cultivate the Talents Nature has given them; insomuch, that we see the Liberty of their Country shine in their Orations. He goes on, *but as for us, who were early taught to endure the Yoke of Domination, and have been, as it were, wrapt up in the Customs and Ways of Arbitrary Rule; who in a Word, never tasted that living and Flowing Spring of Eloquence and Liberty; we commonly, instead of Orators, become pompous Flatterers, for which reason, I believe a Man Born in Servitude, may be capable of other Sciencies, but no Slave can ever be an Orator, since when the Mind is depress'd and broken by Slavery, it will never dare to think, or say any thing bold. All its Vigour evaporates of it self, and it remains always as in Bonds; in short, to make use of* Homer's *Expression.*

The Day that makes a Free Born Man a Slave,
Robs him of half his Vertue.

It is observable, that *Boileau* has no manner of remark on all this Passage; it wou'd not have agreed with his Pension, from his Master the *French* King, to have said a Word in praise of it, nor with his Conscience to have condemn'd it; but *Dacier*, who had a *Hugonot* Education, observes speaking of Liberty, shining in the Orations of Orators living in Free States, that as those

Men are their own Maſters, their Mind us'd to this Independence, produces nothing but what has the Marks of that Liberty, which is the Principal Aim of all their Actions.

Now what a Friend the Letter writer, is to Liberty, we may ſee in the *Examiner* of the 26th of *April*, 1711. which, tho', it may be he did not Write himſelf, whatever ſome People ſay to the contrary, he and his Party have ſufficiently own'd to make them accountable for every Word in that and the reſt of them. The reaſon *why Publick Injuries are ſo ſeldom redreſs'd, is for want of Arbitrary Power*, he calls it *Diſcretionary*; 'tis true, and if I have wrong'd him, by putting Arbitrary in its Place, I ask his Pardon.——

Having ſaid thus much of his Party in general, I might deſcend to Particulars, and examine the ſufficiency of the Characters of his Academicians, a Liſt of them being handed up and down, in which the Author is not forgot. It is ſet off with Names that muſt not be repeated, and amongſt the reſt are a Doctor or two, two or three Poets and Tell Tales, and that Learned and Facetious Perſon Mr. *D- -ny*, whoſe very Name gives unſpeakeable Hopes of the Progreſs of ſuch a Society, in refining our Language, which he and moſt of his Brethren are ſo great Maſters of, that if twenty of the Liſt will oblige us with as many Lines of Common Senſe and Common Grammar, I will be bound to read every thing that ſhall be publiſh'd by this

Famous Academy, that is to be or under their Auſpices, tho' I had much rather change that Pennance for *Ogilby* and *Blome*. To give us the better *Idea* of his *Scheme*, *he has conſulted with very Judicious Perſons*; we may judge of what truth there is in his *Panegyricks*, by that of the deceas'd *Examiner* on himſelf; where he ſays, *he had written with ſo much Reputation, and ſo much to the Confuſion of the Whigs, that they themſelves have a Value for his Perſon and Abilities, tho they have an Averſion to his Cauſe*. Of the ſame ſize, I doubt not, are the able and judicious Perſons he has conſulted about his Deſign, which muſt be own'd to be very good in it ſelf, and capable of ſuch Improvement as wou'd make it one of the Glories of Her Majeſty's moſt Glorious Reign. But alas, he will never have the Honour of it. A Noble Lord, on whom he has written *Libels* and *Encomiums*, was the firſt that thought of ſuch a thing, and ſome Years ſince nam'd forty Gentlemen to be Members of an Academy, on a Foundation refining on the *French*, of which Number I am very well ſatisfy'd, not a Man of his moſt Illuſtrious Band wou'd ever have been, and that tho' he is ſo generous as to promiſe the Whigs that they ſhall come in if they will, he muſt look 'em out better Company, or his Academy will have the Glory of this great Work to themſelves. Indeed the way is prepar'd for them to *Immortality*, two *Engliſh* Grammars having been publiſh'd within this Twelvemonth, and it remains to him and his Fraternity, to add a *Dictionary* worthy thoſe Immortal Labours;

bours; for which, there are not a Set of Men in *England* better qualify'd, and ſo equal to ſo honourable a Task.

One wou'd think, that towards advancing this Scheme, all the *Literati* of this Kingdom had ſent their Powers to Him. That all the Whigs as well as Tories had entruſted him with their Proxies; for he ſays, *I do here in the Name of all the Learned and Polite Perſons of the Nation complain, &c.* Whereas whatever has been brag'd by him in other Papers of the Nine in Ten, being on his ſide for the Land and Church Intereſt, not nine in a thouſand will truſt him with that of Wit. And I do here in the Name of all the Whigs, proteſt againſt all and every thing done or to be done in it, by him or in his Name; being a Perſon with whom they will have no manner of Dealings, as he very well knows, or they might now have had him Scribbling for them as well as when that Diſcourſe was written *of the Conteſts and Diſſentions of the Nobles and Commons in* Athens *and* Rome, wherein it is ſaid, *'tis agreed, that in all Governments there is an abſolute unlimited Power which naturally and originally ſeems to to be plac'd in the People* in the whole Body; *wherever the Executive part lies*; again, *this unlimited Power, plac'd fundamentally in the Body of a People, &c.* and that he wrote better then than he has done ſince is not to be wonder'd at, if there is any truth in what *Longinus*'s Philoſopher ſays.

It would be a poor Triumph to convict him of an Error in Hiſtory 1700 Years ago, where he tells us, That *Cæſar* never attempted this Iſland; *no Conqueſt was ever attempted till the Time of* Claudius, ſince I do not find that he or his Brethren have any Notion at all that Truth is neceſſary in Hiſtory: For they deny what was done Yeſterday, as frankly as if it had been in *Julius Cæſar*'s Time; yet he himſelf has been ſometimes forc'd to confeſs the Power of Truth, and pay Allegiance to it; as where he ſays, the great Reaſon of the Corruption of the *Roman* Tongue *was the changing their Government into Tyranny, which ruined the Study of Eloquence*; and becauſe the *Whigs* ſhall have a Share in it, he adds, and their calling in the *Palatines, their giving ſeveral Towns in* Germany *the Freedom of the City.* A very pleaſant Reaſon that; for when the *Roman* Language was in the height of its Purity in the *Auguſtan* Age, the Cities of *Aſia* and *Africk* were admitted to that Privilege, as much as the *Europeans* were afterwards; and yet it cannot be pretended the *Moors* were naturally more Polite than the *Germans.* It is plain therefore this was a Party Stroke in favour of the *Naturalization* Act, to ſhew what Inconveniences it hinders by preventing Foreigners coming among us to debauch our Stile, as may be ſeen by the prodigious Number of *Dutch* Words that K. *William* brought with him into *England.*

Another Inſtance of the forc'd Homage he pays to Truth, is his blaming *the Slaviſh*

Diſpo-

Diſpoſition of the Senate and People of Rome, *by which the Eloquence of the Age was wholly turn'd into Panegyrick.* Now conſidering how many Pages he has prodigally beſtow'd upon it, in the very Letter I am taking cognizance of, is it not very odd he ſhould call Panegyrick *a Slaviſh Diſpoſition*, and worſe ſtill that he ſhould term it the *moſt barren of all Subjects*; what if I could prove, that above half of his Three Sheets of Paper are of that kind of Panegyrick, which is ſo fatal to great Men. The *Greeks* ſaid, *Flatterers were like ſo many Ravens croaking about them, and that they never lifted a Man up but as the* Eagle *does the* Tortoiſe, *in order to get ſomething by the fall of him.*

It is a ſad Caſe, when Men get a habit of ſaying what they pleaſe, not caring whether True or Falſe: Who can without pity ſee our Letter Writer accuſe the Famous *La Bruyere*, for being acceſſary to the declining of the *French* Tongue, by his Affectation; when it is notorious, that *La Bruyere* is the moſt maſterly Writer of that Nation, and that his Affectation was in the Turn of his Thought, which he did to ſtrike his Readers, who had been too much us'd to dry Leſſons to receive any Impreſſion by them. He ſays, he has many Hundred *New Words, not to be found in the Common Dictionaries before his Time.* I ſhould be glad to know, who are thoſe Lexicographers, whoſe Knowledge in the *French* Tongue he prefers to *La Bruyere's*; ſince *Richelet* and the *Academy* are not of his Æra. I ſhould rejoyce with him, if a way could

could be found out to *fix our Language for ever*, that like the *Spaniſh* Cloak, it might always be in Faſhion; but I hope he will come into Temper with the Inconſtancy of Peoples Minds, of which he complains, and that we are in no Fear of the Invaſion and Conqueſt he talks of, comforting himſelf, *that the beſt Writings may be preſerved and eſteem'd*, meaning his own and his Friends, which no doubt would fare much better than Mr. *Locks* or Mr. *Hoadly's*; for Conquerors are not us'd to take much Care of thoſe that write againſt them.

I like extreamly his rejecting the Old Cant of *Forty One*, and giving the *great Rebellion* its true Name *Forty Two:* But, if I had been he, I would not have named it at all. For there are a great many Men in *England*, who, tho' they were not concern'd in it themſelves, yet they do not love to hear of it, for the ſake of thoſe that were; and it certainly was an Error in delicacy to touch upon ſo tender a Part, no Man of Honour caring to have his Father and Grand-father call'd Rogue and Rebel to his Face, eſpecially if ſuch Grandfather or Father had no other Fault in the World but his Rebellion; which after ſo many Acts of Oblivion, and a Revolution beſides, can not be a Crime of that Nature, as to laſt to the 3d and 4th Generation. He is much to be commended however for his Impartiality, and pleading Guilty to the Charge of the *Whigs*, that the *Licentiouſneſs* which enter'd with the *Reſtauration*, infected our Religion and Morals.

How

How it corrupted our Language I can't imagine, when the greateſt Maſter of it Arch-Biſhop *Tillotſon*, flouriſh'd all that Time; but I find he is more converſant in the Court Poetry and the Plays, than the other elegant Writings of thoſe Times: Be it as it will, he would lay an Infinite Obligation upon us, if he would recommend us to any Author in the Reign of King *Charles* the Martyr, which he diſtinguiſhes as the Golden Age of Politeneſs; who wrote with the Purity of *Dryden*, *Otway*, and *Etheridge*, and with leſs Affectation, which in Comick Writings is unavoidable, and in the beſt never us'd but to be expos'd. Yet the *Poets* he affirms have *contributed very much to the ſpoiling the Tongue:* And who would he have to reſtore it? Himſelf, and his Brethren. Himſelf a Poet of Renown, and who, if he would once ſpeak his Mind, I make no queſtion is Prouder of his *Elegy upon Patridge*, and his Sonnet on Miſs *Biddy Floyd*, than of all His Proſe Compoſitions together, or even that elegant Poem, call'd *The Humble Petition of* Frances Harris, which is the Pink of Simplicity.

Therefore all the Money I have, which God knows
is a very ſmall Stock,
I keep in a Pocket ty'd about my middle, next my
Smock:
So when I went to put my Purſe, as God would
have it, my Smock was unript,
And inſtead of putting it into my Pocket, down
it ſlipt.

Then

Then the Bell rung, and I went down to put my
Lady to Bed,
And God knows, I thought my Money was as safe
as my Maidenhead.

There is a great deal more of it, all as Easy and Natural as this, in the true Stile of Mrs. *Abigail*, and just as Amphibuous. It is as much Poetry as Prose, Pretty and Innocent, according to the Rules of Criticism; which the Author has taken more care not to break, than the First Commandment; tho' one wou'd think it was his Business to have been mindful of it; and if he had left the Smock to be uptipt by the Butler, it wou'd have done every whit as well. I cannot help taking notice, that the Clamour he raises about the Poets of King *Charles* the Second's Reign, the only Age of Poetry in *England*, is for their Contractions and leaving out the *Eds* and *Eths*, wherein he offends intollerably in this very Dogrel of his. Who wou'd have said *Smock unript and down it slipt*, and not *unripped* and *slipped*; there is a waggery in it much better than any *Hudibrastick*; for it wou'd have run thus:

So when I went to put my Purse as God wou'd
have it, my Smock was unripped,
And instead of putting it into my Pocket down
it slipped.

It will be no Authority with him, that Mr. *Dryden* commonly contracted the Syllables that end *in Ed or Eth.* He was

a Poet, and tho' certainly in moſt caſes the ſound is ſweetned by it, yet it offends thoſe who are not for loſing a Letter, and were they *Frenchmen*, would doubtleſs be for pronouncing every one of them, as well as Writing, to the great ſtrengthning of that Enervate Tongue, which languiſhes in reading for want of the *Ez's* and *Er's*, ſo barbarouſly mangled in Pronounciation. A great Lord, and one who wou'd be worthy of a Place, which is deny'd him in this Academy, having written againſt my Lord *Rocheſter* in an *Eſſay upon Poetry*, Mr. *Wolſely*, attacks the *Eſſayer* in a Preface written on purpoſe, and printed before *Valentinian*, wherein he has criticis'd on his Lordſhip's Poem, and on theſe two Lines in particular:

That Author's Name has undeſerved Praiſe,
Who pall'd the Appetite he meant to raiſe.

Where he obſerves the Advantage the Verſe had in the *Ed*, for without it it muſt have hobled on Nine Feet inſtead of Ten, *What does that Ed*, ſays he, *in* undeſerved *do there? I know no Buſineſs it has, unleſs it be to crutch a Lame Verſe, and each out a ſcanty Senſe; for the Word that is now uſed is Undeſerv'd. I ſhou'd not take notice of ſuch a Thing as this, but that I have to do with a giver of Rules, and a Magiſterial Corrector of other Men; tho' upon the obſerving ſuch little Niceties, does all the Muſick of Numbers depend. But the Refinement of our Verſication is a ſort of Criticiſm, which the* Eſſayer, *if we may judge of his*

Knowledge by his Practice, seems yet to learn; for never was there such a Pack of Stiff ill sounding Rhimes put together as his Essay is stuff'd with: To add therefore to his other Collections, let him remember hereafter, that Verses have Feet given 'em either to walk gracefully and smooth, and sometimes with Majesty and Stave like Virgils, *or to run light and easy like* Ovid's, *not to stand stock still like Dr.* Donne's, *or to babble like indigested Prose: That the counting of the Syllables is the least Part of the Poets Work, in the turning either of a soft or a Sonorous Line; that the* Ed's *went away with the For to's,* and the *Until's* in that general *Rout that fell on the whole Body of the* thereon's, *the* therein's, *and* thereby's, *when those useful* Expletives, *the* altho's *and the* Unto's, *and those most convenient* Synalæpha's 'midst, 'mongst, 'gainst, *and* 'twixt, *were every one* cut off; *which dismal Slaughter was follow'd with the utter Extirpation of the ancient House of the* hereof's *and the* therefrom's, *&c. Nor is this Reformation the Arbitrary Fancy of a Few, who would impose their own Private Opinions and Practices upon the rest of their Countrymen, but grounded on the Authority of* Horace, *who tells us in his Epistle* de arte Poetica, *that Present Use is the final Judge of Language, (the Verse is too well known to need quoting) and on the common Reason of Mankind, which forbids us those antiquated Words and obsolete Idioms of Speech, whose worth Time has worn out, how well soever they may seem to stop a Gap in Verse, and suit our shapeless immature Conceptions; for what is grown Pedantick and unbecoming when 'tis spoke, will not have a*

for the better grace for being writ down. This Gentleman's Opinion, and that of others, which agrees with his, justify'd by the Example of all the Polite Writers in King *Charles* the Second's Reign, which probably may be the *Auguſtan* Age of *Engliſh* Poetry, is not to warrant the Affectation of ſuch as are for the *Can'ts*, the *Don'ts*, the *Won'ts*, the *Shan'ts*, &c. but to refer to the Ear the cutting off thoſe uſeleſs Syllables the *Ed's* and *Eth's* both in Verſe and Proſe; and I queſtion whether any one wou'd not be better pleas'd to hear *diſtur'd* read than *diſturbed*, and *rebuk'd* than *rebuked*, tho' the Doctor wonders how it can be endur'd.

How intolerable muſt thoſe two Lines of *Hudibras* be to him then, on more Accounts than one,

Hence 'tis that 'cauſe y' 'ave gain'd o' th' College
A quarter Share at moſt of Knowledge.

Where there are almoſt as many Abreviations as there are Words, and I queſtion whether the being an *Hudibraſtick* is ſufficient to excuſe it, if it is, otherwiſe inexcuſable; perhaps the Reader may not be diſpleas'd to ſee the Lines that follow, which are no great Digreſſion from our Subject.

T' assume a Pow'r as absolute,
To judge and censure and controul,
As if you were the sole, Sir Poll;
And sawcily pretend to know
More than your Dividend comes to.
You'll find the Thing will not be done
With Ignorance and Face alone:
No, tho' y' have purchas'd to your Name,
In History so great a Fame,
That now your Talent's so well known
For having all belief out grown
That every strange prodigious Tale
Is measur'd by your German *Scale;*
By which the Virtuosi *try*
The Magnitude of every Lye, &c.

Which may very well be introduc'd as often as one has occasion to speak of the late *Examiner*, or any one that belongs to him. Let this Learned Doctor and his new Academy do their utmost to furnish our Language with what the *French* call *Chevilles*, with his *Thoroughs*, *Althoughs*, and the whole Army of antiquated Words before-mention'd; I can't imagine Mr. *Dryden*'s Poetry will be in any Danger of becoming unintelligible, tho' he has us'd Abreviations as much as any Polite Writer; and will preserve that Character when the Doctor's is forgotten, unless we should return to our Original Barbarity, as he says we incline to do. He complains the Refinement of our Language has hitherto been trusted *to illeterate Court Fops, Half-witted Poets, and University Boys.* He would have

a thin Society, if he ſhould exclude all ſuch from his own Academy: And if the Choice be in himſelf, as he ſeems to inſinuate, I believe the Reformation of our Language would have juſt as much ſucceſs as the Reformation of our Manners, which, 'tis ſaid, none have more corrupted than the very Reformers. He gives us his Word, That *the Style of ſome great Miniſters very much exceed that of any other Productions.* Where I wonder are the Inſtances of this Excellence? In Speeches in Parliament, for themſelves or others, or what Works of theris has been communicated to him, that he ſhould know more than all Mankind? One would think he was their Maſter by what he ſays, in the next Page, *What I have moſt at Heart, is ſome Method for aſcertaining and fixing our Language for ever.* Now you muſt know, that this Reverend Author, who is ſo concern'd for the Fixing our Language, has himſelf a Style of a very deficient Character; in which the Reader will perceive how much we ſhou'd be *improv'd*, by having his manner *aſcertained and fixed*; for doubtleſs he thinks his own the beſt, and his Friends know no better than to be of his Mind. *He would be more comprehenſive*, ſays an Author of Note, *if he would alter and correct his Style, which is too looſe and diffus'd in all Conſcience. So that when I read him ſometimes for a good while together, tho' I go on very evenly and ſmoothly, I find it difficult to recollect what I have been doing, and whether I have been reading or ſleeping. My preſent Advice to him therefore is, that he would ſtudy*

Tacitus

Tacitus, and such other Politicians as say much in few Words: And if he obstinately persists in the same Childish fondness for his Style, I shall be obliged to shew in how small a Compass the whole Substance of what he says, may be contained. All this vile Drudgery will I submit to for his sake, &c. But so little likelihood there is of his mending his Style by reading *Tacitus*, that he defies him and charges him with the Corruption of the *Roman* Tongue, by saying that in Two or Three Words, about which such a Genius as he is might have employ'd Twenty or Thirty. This Brevity he calls Affectation, and assures us, it brought Barbarisms into the *Latin* Tongue, even before the *Goths* invaded *Italy*. However he exposes his own Ignorance, he should have been careful not to have discover'd his Friends: Does the *Translation* of the *Bible* teach us to understand *Fairfax*? Are that and the *Common-Prayer* the Standard of Language? Yet he affirms, that without them one cou'd not understand any thing written a hundred Years ago. Whereas the *Jerusalem* of *Fairfax* is older than that, and whoever reads it will find the Language as new as any can be expected from the New Academy these Fifty Years. For our Tongue is not so variable in the best Authors as the Doctor represents it, and the difference between the present *English* and the *English* a Hundred Years ago, is not so great as between the Old and Modern *French* in that Term. Of all the Parts of Learning, that is surely the least ally'd to Politeness

that

that deals in Old Musty Manuscripts, and affects a Knowledge in Tongues which have not one Polite Book to recommend them: How such a Quality can be serviceable to the Advancement of Wit and *Eloquence*, I cannot conceive; but there are some Characters in the World, that encroach upon all others, and some Men that for their Interest will say any thing that comes uppermost, either for or against another. The Knowledge of Tongues is certainly very useful; but if a Person knows a great many Ancient and Modern, and can hardly speak intelligibly in his own, He shou'd be no Orator for me. I would no more value his Learning than Sir *Hudibras*'s, of which the Doctor puts me in mind more than once by his Compliments, especially of this Passage in the first Canto.

We grant, altho' he had much Wit,
He was very shy of using it,
As being loth to wear it out,
And therefore bore it not about,
Unless on Holydays or so,
As Men their best Apparel do.
Besides, 'tis known he could speak Greek
As naturally as Pigs squeak:
That Latin *was no more difficile*
Than to a Blackbird 'tis to whistle;
Being rich in both he never scanted
His Bounty unto such as wanted;
But much of either would afford,
To many that had not one Word:
For Hebrew *Roots, altho' they're found*
To flourish but in barren Ground,

He

He had such Plenty as suffic'd
To make some think him circumcis'd.

The rest of Sir *Hudibras*'s Merit in Letters is of a Piece, and set off with a Puritanical Air, that renders the whole truly Ridiculous, and makes a good Comment on several Pages of the Doctor's Epistle, which is most valuable for the great Judgment and Sincerity that he has shewn in it.

It has already been observ'd, that *Horace* asserts *Usus* to be the only Rule of Language; and the Letter-Writer repeats what he says, *of Words going off and perishing like Leaves, and new ones coming in their Places*, which he tells us did not approve of *Horace*; notwithstanding his own Law of paying Obedience to usage. For if that were necessary, what, according to our Author, would become of his *Monumentum Ære perennius?* Did not the *Roman* Tongue even by his own confession, change as much as ours has done. *The Latin Three Hundred Years before* Tully *was as unintelligable in his Time as the* English *and* French *of the same Period are now.* And the Corruptions afterwards by the *Barbarians* made it as different from *Cicero*'s as *Ennius*'s; yet amidst all those variations, *Horace*'s Works are still *Monumentum ære perennius.* When a Tongue is come to any degree of Perfection, whoever writes well in it will Live; ther'es a Thirst after Wit in all Ages, and those that have a Taste of it will distinguish the Thought from the Diction

Chaucer.

Chaucer will, no doubt, be admir'd as long as the *English* Tongue has a Being; and the Changes that have happen'd to our Language have not hinder'd his Works out living their Contemporary Monuments of Brass or Marble.

The Doctor may as well set up a Society to find out the *Grand Elixir*, the *Perpetual Motion*, the *Longitude*, and other such Discoveries, as to fix our Language beyond their own Times. The Test of their Successors will vary with the Age, and their Rules grow obsolete as well as their Words. He would make us believe, that the *French* Academy have not been able to preserve their Language from Decay, and who are the Men in *Britain* who pretend to greater Genius for Eloquence than the most Polite of the Politest Nation in *Europe*. Mr. *Waller* Elegantly complains of the Change which necessarily happens to Stile, and does it however in Language which shews, that the Doctor need not be afraid of People's forgetting his Patron a Hundred Years hence, if he can write as good *English* upon him now, as Mr. *Waller* did on this Subject Threescore Years ago.

But who can hope his Lines should long
Last, in a daily changing Tongue,
While they are new, Envy prevails,
And as that dies, our Language fails.

When Architects have done their Part,
The Matter may betray their Art;
Time, if we use ill-Chosen Stone,
Soon brings a well-built Palace down.

Poets that Lasting Marble seek,
Must carve in Latin or in Greek;
We write in Sand, our Language grows,
And like our Tide, Ours overflows.

Our Author sees the necessity of this Changing our Language. What has been the Fate of all Tongues Ancient and Modern, and for the same Reasons will Eternally be so, he wou'd defend ours from, because the Chinese *have Books in their Tongue above* 2000 *Years Old*, And a History of 30000 Years Period with a Succession of Kings, 20000 Years before *Adam*. It would be a Discovery worthy those Men who have lately been reconciling Contradictions, and building Arguments upon Nonsence, to find out that *certain Standard for our Tongue, to which, if it were refixed*, he assures us, *it might be fixt for Ever*. This would be doing what was never done before, what neither *Roman* nor *Greek*, which lasted the longest of any in its Purity, could pretend to. And this would not be the only strange thing that has lately happen'd to us, which never happen'd to a Nation before. It will be in vain to pretend to *ascertain* Language, unless they had the Secret of setting Rules for Thinking, and could

could bring Thought to a Standard too. For every Age, as well as every Nation, has its different manner of Thinking, of which the Expreſſion and Words will always have a Reliſh, and be Barbarous or Polite, according as the Times take their Turn. If from the abundance of good Senſe which appears lately in every thing we do, The Doctor can demonſtrate, that we never were in a better way towards the Perfection of Thought and Language, let him ſet about his Academy as ſoon as he pleaſes. But if the contrary is apparent, it may not be improper to wait for ſome more propitious Opportunity. Beſides, there will in all times be irregular Genius's, who out of Humour will prefer Affectation to Nature, and miſtake Novelty for Beauty. *Boileau* in his Reflections upon *Longinus*, has ſeveral Obſervations of this kind, which will ſhew the difference between true and falſe Judgment, by comparing what he writes with ſeveral Paſſages in the Doctor's Letter; he is ſpeaking of the Famous *Ronſard* and his Imitators, *Du-Bellai*, *Du Bartas*, *Deſportes*, and other *French* Poets in the Reigns of *Henry* III. and IV. who were in great Fame for a long while, and when he wrote, ſunk into the laſt Contempt. *The ſame among the* Romans, ſays he, *was the Fate* ‘ *of* Nævius, Livius, *and* Ennius, who in ‘ *Horace*'s time had a great many Admirers ‘ as that Poet informs us, but at laſt they ‘ were entirely decry'd. And it muſt not ‘ be imagin'd that the Fall of theſe Au-

‘ thors,

thors, as well *French* as *Latin*, was owing to the Change of their Languages. The true Reason was, they did not know how to hit the Point of Solidity and Perfection in those Languages, which is necessary to make a Work last, and set a Value upon it for ever. In effect, the *Latin* Tongue, as it was written by *Cicero* and *Virgil*, was very much chang'd in *Quintilian*'s Time, and still more in the Time of *Aulus Gellius*. However *Cicero* and *Virgil* were then more esteem'd than even in their own Time, because they attain'd the height of Perfection, of which I have spoken. It is not therefore on account of the antiquated Words and Expressions in *Ronsard*, that *Ronsard* has lost the Reputation he once had, but because the Beauties which were thought to be in him appear'd all at once to be no Beauties at all.

Thus we see, that in order to bring us to the degree of Perfection with which the Doctor flatters us by means of his new Academy, they must teach us first to think justly, to distinguish false Beauty from true, and glaring from Brightness, to banish those that write by Humour, and receive only such as aim at Solidity in their Writings. How the Celebrated *Tale* of a Tub will come off then with the best Judges, I can easily guess, that excellent Treatise, being much of the same nature as *Rabelais*, of whom *La Bruyere* says, Rabelais *is incomprehensible: His Book is an inexplicable Enigma,*

a meer Chimera; It has a Woman's Face, with the Feet and Tail of a Serpent, or ſome Beaſt more deform'd. 'Tis a Monſtrous Colleſtion of Political and Ingenious Morality, with a Mixture of Beaſtlineſs; where 'tis bad 'tis abominable, and fit for the Diverſion of the Rabble, and where 'tis good 'tis exquiſite, and may entertain the moſt delicate.

People very often apply thoſe Faults to the Expreſſion and Words which are originally in the thought. The Merit of ſuch as write by Humour, Changes with the Mode, and their Language ſavouring of their Sentiments, muſt of courſe grow out of Faſhion. *Ronſard* the *French* Poet was ſo far from writing ill *French*, that *Paſquier* thought the *French* Tongue in its Perfection in his Writings and yet upon the Appearance of *Malherb* and *Bacan*, he was no more read nor talk'd of; Whereas there were Authors before him, whoſe Writings are now in general Eſteem, as *Marot* and St: *Galais*, for the kind of Poetry in which they excell'd, and their Stile is imitated for its Simplicity, by which *la Fountain* acquir'd his Fame.

Inſtances of this kind may be given in our own Tongue, which has improv'd in Refinement as much as the *French*. Our *Shakeſpear* ſhone on the Stage, with all the Qualities of a Dramatick Poet, and *Diction* in particular, when the the *French* Stage was Barbarous. His Style has its Beauties now, and is newer than many who have ſince Writ, and for a while with Reputation.

Among

Among all the various ways in which we of late have endeavour'd to endear our ſelves to the *French*, and make 'em forgive us for beating them ſo, nothing certainly will oblige 'em more than our affecting to imitate them in our Political Style. Of this Nature is that Novelty the Reverend Author has introduc'd into our Language, where the Term *Prime Miniſter* has no more a Place than *Will and Pleaſure*. Pray who among the many Miniſters Her Majeſty is ſo happily ſerv'd by, does ſhe Honour with that Name, and how comes it that *Prime* does not go with Precedence? What Law of ours Impowers any body to order our Language to be *Inſpected*, and who is there that wou'd think himſelf oblig'd to obey him in it? Is there no difference between the Miniſters of a Deſpotick Monarchy, and the Servants of a limited one, who have no Rule but the Law, and are as accountable to it as the vileſt of their Flatterers. We ſee how our Tongue would be improv'd and enlarg'd, had the Doctor and his Brethren the ordering of it. He has already impos'd on us the Court Style of *France*, and their Politicks wou'd ſoon come after it. He paſſes a particular Compliment on our Tongue and his Patron, that they have not Merit enough to ſubſiſt a Hundred Years without mending. As bad as our *Engliſh* is, I'll engage it will ſubſiſt in the Hiſtory of another great Man of this Nation, as long as the Names of *Edward* the IIIth. or *Henry* V. ſhall be remembred

bred in *Britain*. There being ſome Characters ſo illuſtrious that without the Ornaments of Stile or the Beauties of Wit, they Shine in their Native Dreſs, and make every thing look Glorious about them. Others there are which require all the Advantages of Language and Invention, and darken every Thing that comes near them. The beſt of it is, the Contempt with which he treats the *Engliſh* Tongue, is not like to do it any harm, for whatever becomes of any ones Hiſtory a Hundred Years hence, the Doctor's will certainly be of much ſhorter Date, unleſs his Cenſurers ſhould preſerve the Memory of him, or he thinks fit to own at laſt ſome other of his Productions, when 'tis probable Fortune has done her beſt or her worſt for him.

I have ſeveral very good Reaſons why, if I were to be of this Academy, I would baniſh the word Dozen out of our Dictionary, and the Doctor has no doubt his to be fond of it, and fixing it there for ever. The *French* King ſays *he has given about half a dozen Penſions to Learned Men in ſeveral Parts of* Europe, *and perhaps a dozen in his own Kingdom*; which, he ſaid, purely out of Affection to the Word Dozen, becauſe he knew full well the *French* King beſtows Penſions on a Hundred Men in ſeveral Parts of *Europe*; and on a Thouſand in his own Kingdom, who excel in Arts and Literature, *which, including the whole, do not amount to half the Income of many a Private Commoner in* England. Whereas I will engage to name

name Him a Hundred Penſions in *France* that have been given to Men of Letters, every one of which ſhall amount to more than half the Income of a dozen Lords, let me have the naming of them too. The Hiſtory of his Reign, which has been ſo long Writing, has coſt him near threeſcore Thouſand Pounds Sterling. *Boileau* himſelf, after he had liv'd a Life of Affluence and Pleaſure, keeping a Country-Houſe and City-Houſe, dy'd worth above Five or Six Thouſand Pounds, which he had wholly from the King. Not to mention the Rewards *Racine*, *Valincourt*, and other Poets and Hiſtorians had, who were imployed about his Hiſtory; Nor thoſe to all Academies of Sciences founded by him, and the great Penſions he allow'd the Profeſſors. The prodigious Expences he has been at in Printing only at the *Louvre*, would perhaps amount to a Sum equal to the whole Income of ſeveral Dozens that might be thought of above the Rank of Commoners.

The laſt Pages of the Doctor's Book are incomparable, full of moſt delicate Eulogy in the World, which I cannot read without calling to mind that Verſe of *Deſpreaux* to Monſieur *Seignelai*.

Tout

Tout Eloge impoſteur bleſſe une ame ſincere.

To paint a *Mecænas* like a *Mars*, and confound Men's Qualities, is a Stale Practice of ſo ded Flatterers, which Men of Merit reject with Diſdain.

Un Cœur Noble eſt content de ce qu il trouve en lui.
Et ne Supplaudit point de Qualitez d' autrui.

A great Soul ſcorns to uſurp another's worth, and is always content with its own.

The Doctor ſeems to have an Opinion, that every body loves Flattery as well as himſelf, and will take any Thing kindly that is ſaid in their Favour. A little more Sincerity would not be amiſs in the Compoſition of a Clergy-man. and if this is the way to get the *Medal* he talks of, it will be dearly purchas'd.

I ſhall be heartily glad to ſee ſome of of thoſe Productions from Men above Money, that ſhall deſerve the Laurel he has prepar'd for them. People, I doubt not, will crowd to get their Scriptions in, as they do to get Money into the Lottery; but certainly, the Society will take care of themſelves, and if there's any thing to be got have the Foreſtalling of the Market. The Deſign itſelf is uſeful, and cannot meet with too much Encouragement

ment, Her Majesty, always willing to promote the Good of our Country, will, it is hop'd, hearken to it in due time; but if it *be defer'd till Peace* there will be no great Harm in it, tho' he is pleas'd to rally one of's the late M———rs, as much above his Satyr as his Panagyrick, for being so silly as to prefer Necessity to Convenience.

The want of a *Grammar* and *Dictionary* has been long complain'd of; and we cannot expect our Tongue will ever spread abroad, unless Foreigners are put into a more regular Method of learning it. To distribute Rewards to Merit, is the Duty of a good Ministry, and nothing contributes more to the Glory of a Country than Works of *Eloquence* and *Wit*; but he has assum'd a Post that will not be allow'd him. He has set himself in the Director's Chair of an *English* Academy; before he has past Examination whether he is fit for a Place at the Board; Members are nam'd that have no Right to such Honour, unless it is a Privilege that is Inseperable from their Posts and Peerage; and he has given us Assurance of fine Pieces of *Wit* and *Eloquence* from a Quarter it never yet came.

Projectors, like Quacks, promise Wonders, but 'tis always the Labour of the Mountain———I might enlarge on this Head if I had not run my Reflections too far already. I shall therefore conclude with a Discription of one of those Quacks and Pretenders, as I find it in the Speech of the famous *Alexander Bendo*, who, as much a Quack

Quack as he was, underſtood our Tongue and our Conſtitution as well as the Doctor and his Maſter.

Reflect a little, ſays he, *what a kind of Creature a Quack is.* Mind what follows. *He is one who is fain to ſupply ſome higher Ability he pretends to with Craft. He draws great Companies to him by undertaking ſtrange Things which can never be effected* The reſt is ſo valuable, that tho I digreſs'd in it Ten times more than I do, I would preſent the Doctor with it, and leave it to his ſerious Conſideration.

The Politician by his Example, no doubt, finding how the People are taken with ſpecious, miraculous Impoſſibilities, plays the ſame Game, proteſts, declares, promiſes, I know not what things, which he is ſure can ne'er be brought about. The People believe, are deluded, and pleaſed; the Expectation of a future Good, which ſhall never befal them, draws their Eyes off of a preſent Evil. Thus they are kept and eſtabliſh'd in Subjection, Peace and Obedience, and he in Greatneſs, Wealth, and Power: So you ſee the Politician is, and muſt be a Quack in State Affairs and the Quack (no doubt if he thrives) is an Errant Politician en Phyſick.

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM